

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for adapting the content and/or the cost of transmission and/or service operations carried out within a data packet transmission network, during a session between a source unit and a destination unit  
5 interconnected via at least one node of said network, said destination unit and/or said at least one node being used by at least one operator and/or at least one service provider, said process being such that:

10 - in said source unit and/or in at least one node, called a credit node, a credit gateway assigns to each data packet, sent by said source unit, a payment token which has an initial value representing a credit of monetary units previously acquired from a toll center;

15 - in said destination unit and/or in at least one node, called a debit node, located downstream of said at least one credit node, a debit gateway modifies the payment token assigned to each data packet received, so as to reduce said payment token initial value, by an amount representing the cost of the operations to be carried out, for said received packet, by said destination unit and/or said at least one debit node;

20 - said destination unit and/or each debit node, in which a said debit gateway is included, receives from said toll center, for each packet received during said session, financial settlement of said representative amount;

25 characterised in that at least one of said payment tokens includes, apart from said initial value representing a credit of monetary units, at least one operation adaptation datum, allowing said destination unit and/or said at least one debit node to adapt:

- the content of the operations to be carried out;

- and/or the cost actually billed to said source unit and/or said at least one credit node, for 5 carrying out said operations.

2. A process according to claim 1, characterised in that said at least one operation adaptation datum belongs to the group including data relating to the 10 user, direct or indirect, of said source unit and/or said at least one credit node.

3. A process according to claim 2, characterised in that, in order to adapt the actually billed cost, 15 said destination unit and/or said at least one debit node carries out the following stages:

- determination of said actually billed cost, as a function of said at least one operation adaptation datum;

20 - reduction of said payment token initial value, by a pre-set average amount representing the average cost of the operations to be carried out;

25 - modification of the current value of an associated account relating to a user, direct or indirect, of said source unit and/or said at least one credit node, by addition or withdrawal of a sum as a function of the difference between said actually billed cost and said pre-set average amount.

30 4. A process according to claim 3, characterised in that said source unit is used by a provider of access to said data packet transmission network, and allows said access to be provided to at least one subscriber to said access provider, called an indirect 35 user,

and in that said at least one operation adaptation datum is added to said packet by said access provider, and depends on the subscriber in respect of whom said access provider sends said packet.

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5. A process according to claim 3, characterised in that said payment token is assigned to a given packet by insertion into said packet and/or into at least one higher level encapsulating structure of said 10 packet.

6. A process according to claim 2, characterised in that, in order to adapt the actually billed cost, said destination unit and/or said at least one debit 15 node carries out the following stages:

- determination of said actually billed cost, as a function of said at least one operation adaptation datum;

20 - reduction of said payment token initial value, by a pre-set average amount representing the average cost of the operations to be carried out;

25 - return to said source unit and/or to said at least one credit node of a payment token which has a value function of the difference between said actually billed cost and said pre-set average amount, so that the value of said returned payment token is restored to a user, direct or indirect, of said source unit and/or said at least one credit node.

30 7. A process according to claim 6, characterised in that said source unit is used by a provider of access to said data packet transmission network, and allows said access to be provided to at least one subscriber to said access provider, called an indirect 35 user,

and in that said at least one operation adaptation datum is added to said packet by said access provider, and depends on the subscriber in respect of whom said access provider sends said packet.

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8. A process according to claim 6, characterised in that said payment token is assigned to a given packet by insertion into said packet and/or into at least one higher level encapsulating structure of said 10 packet.

9. A process according to claim 2, characterised in that said source unit is used by a provider of access to said data packet transmission network, and 15 allows said access to be provided to at least one subscriber to said access provider, called an indirect user,

and in that said at least one operation adaptation datum is added to said packet by said access provider, 20 and depends on the subscriber in respect of whom said access provider sends said packet.

10. A process according to claim 9, characterised in that said addition stage by said access provider of 25 said at least one operation adaptation datum is billed at least partly to said destination unit and/or said at least one debit node.

11. A process according to claim 2, characterised 30 in that said data packet transmission network is a network of the Internet type.

12. A process according to claim 2, characterised 35 in that said service operations belong to the group including:

- information data supply operations;

- video data supply operations;
- audio data supply operations;
- cartography data supply operations.

5 13. A process according to claim 1, characterised  
in that, in order to adapt the actually billed cost,  
said destination unit and/or said at least one debit  
node carries out the following stages:

- determination of said actually billed cost,  
10 as a function of said at least one operation adaptation  
datum;
- reduction of said payment token initial  
value, by a pre-set average amount representing the  
average cost of the operations to be carried out;
- 15 - modification of the current value of an  
associated account relating to a user, direct or  
indirect, of said source unit and/or said at least one  
credit node, by addition or withdrawal of a sum as a  
function of the difference between said actually billed  
20 cost and said pre-set average amount.

14. A process according to claim 1, characterised  
in that, in order to adapt the actually billed cost,  
said destination unit and/or said at least one debit  
node carries out the following stages:

- determination of said actually billed cost,  
as a function of said at least one operation adaptation  
datum;
- reduction of said payment token initial  
30 value, by a pre-set average amount representing the  
average cost of the operations to be carried out;
- return to said source unit and/or to said at  
least one credit node of a payment token which has a  
value function of the difference between said actually  
35 billed cost and said pre-set average amount, so that  
the value of said returned payment token is restored to

a user, direct or indirect, of said source unit and/or said at least one credit node.

15. A process according to claim 1, characterised  
5 in that said source unit is used by a provider of  
access to said data packet transmission network, and  
allows said access to be provided to at least one  
subscriber to said access provider, called an indirect  
user,

10 and in that said at least one operation adaptation  
datum is added to said packet by said access provider,  
and depends on the subscriber in respect of whom said  
access provider sends said packet.

15 16. A process according to claim 15,  
characterised in that said addition stage by said  
access provider of said at least one operation  
adaptation datum is billed at least partly to said  
destination unit and/or said at least one debit node.

20 17. A process according to claim 1, characterised  
in that said payment token is assigned to a given  
packet by insertion into said packet and/or into at  
least one higher level encapsulating structure of said  
packet.

18. A process according to claim 1, characterised  
in that said data packet transmission network (4) is a  
network of the Internet type.

30 19. A process according to claim 1, characterised  
in that said service operations belong to the group  
including:

- information data supply operations;
- video data supply operations;
- audio data supply operations;

- cartography data supply operations.
20. A system for adapting the content and/or the cost of transmission and/or service operations carried out within a data packet transmission network, during a session between a source unit and a destination unit interconnected via at least one node of said network, said destination unit and/or said at least one node being used by at least one operator and/or at least one service provider, said process being such that:
- said source unit and/or at least one node, called a credit node, includes a credit gateway making it possible to assign to each data packet, sent by said source unit, a payment token which has an initial value representing a credit of monetary units previously acquired from a toll centre;
  - said destination unit and/or at least one node, called a debit node, located downstream of said at least one credit node, includes a debit gateway making it possible to modify the payment token assigned to each data packet received, so as to reduce said payment token initial value, by an amount representing the cost of the operations to be carried out, for said received packet, by said destination unit and/or said at least one debit node;
  - said destination unit and/or each debit node, in which a said debit gateway is included, receives from said toll centre, for each packet received during said session, financial settlement of said representative amount;
- characterised in that said system includes inclusion means in at least one of said payment tokens, apart from said initial value representing a credit of monetary units, of at least one operation adaptation datum,

and in that said destination unit and/or said at least one debit node includes adaptation means, as a function of said at least one operation adaptation datum:

- 5        - of the content of the operations to be carried out;
- and/or the cost actually billed to said source unit and/or to said at least one credit node, for carrying out said operations.